

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY MR SALEM AZZAM, SECRETARY GENERAL,
ISLAMIC COUNCIL AT A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD AT THE LONDON PRESS
CENTRE ON 7 NOVEMBER 1988

Brother Hikmatyar, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me pleasure on behalf of the Islamic Council to welcome you and to thank you for your attendance at this press conference, which is going to be addressed by brother Engineer Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, leader of Hizb-i-Islami, Afghanistan. We are fortunate to have the benefit of his on-the-spot survey of the latest situation in Afghanistan.

I need hardly stress the importance of the continuing progress of the Afghan Mujahideen, not only for a liberated Afghanistan but also for the elimination of a Soviet geo-political threat in one of the world's most sensitive and strategic areas. In the last nine years of its colonial war the Soviet Union has spared no weapon of destruction in a desperate bid to perpetuate its hold on Afghanistan through the tactics of propping up the puppet regime it had installed in Kabul. The valiant jihad of the Afghan Mujahideen, which is unique and a milestone in the history of liberation movements, compelled the Soviet leaders to recognise that their military adventure had, in the words of Gorbachov himself, been a 'costly mistake' and a 'bleeding wound', and forced them to cut their losses and start to withdraw from Afghanistan. But, of course, the struggle continues in Afghanistan, and recent reports of Soviet long-range missiles in Kabul, and their use, show that the Soviet Union is violating the Geneva Accords and is now threatening another sovereign state - Pakistan.

The success of the Mujahideen has been at a terrible cost. Conservative estimates reckon the figure of Afghan casualties at no less than one million. More than half the country's population of 15 million has been uprooted and their eventual repatriation will require a massive effort to transport, feed and house them, and to provide medical care.

The trail of death and destruction and immeasurable human suffering is the consequence of the Soviet Union's invasion and nine years of war. The resources needed for a reconstruction and rehabilitation programme will run into billions of dollars. It is imperative that the Soviet Union must not be allowed to escape its responsibility by merely offering token contribution towards the massive relief needed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You have the power of the media to shape opinion. And I should like to acknowledge here the valuable support which the media, especially in the West and in the Muslim world, has given to the Afghan resistance. I am confident this support will continue. But I would urge you now to give thought to the demands of justice and to raise your voices to influence the world community to bring the Soviet aggressors to book for their misdeeds in Afghanistan. Of course help is needed from the world community also, but Soviet finance primarily must pay for the re-establishment of Afghanistan's infrastructure, for the rebuilding of its shattered villages, towns and cities, for the redevelopment of its ruined agriculture, to mention only part of the enormous task ahead. As well as giving vital and obligatory aid to Afghanistan, Soviet reparations on this scale would be a guarantee to other small and innocent nations against aggression from more powerful and better equipped states.

Ladies and Gentlemen, without taking any more of your time, I welcome brother Engineer Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, leader of Hizb-i-Islami, Afghanistan, and invite him to brief us on the latest situation in Afghanistan.

Brother Engineer Gulbuddin Hikmatyar....